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ABSTRACT

Written to be used as a manual for a tutor and not a workbook or primer, this expanded version of a phonics book is designed to help parents teach their children to read and for those who wish to help older children and adults to read. Sections include: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "What Went Wrong? (an essay); (3) "HOW to Teach Someone to Read by Beginning with Basic Phonics" (the main body of the manual); and (4) "Special Problems." A chronology, a 24-item bibliography and a page depicting a "hornbook for the twentieth century" with brief instructions are attached. (RS)

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ED324661

How the Alphabet Works

A Handbook for Teaching Someone to Read

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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SYSTEMATIC BASIC PHONICS

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

. b c/c d . f g/g h . j k l m n .
p q r s t . v w x y/y z

a e i o u a e i o u

ab	eb	ib	ob	ub	‖	ba	be	bi	bo	bu
ac	ec	ic	oc	uc	‖	ca	*ce*	*ci*	co	cu
ad	ed	id	od	ud	‖	da	de	di	do	du

sh th ch wh ph qu -ng

er ir ur	ar or	ow ou	aw au	oo oo	oy oi	ti ci si

A HORNBOOK FOR THE 20TH CENTURY

Based on the 15th Century Hornbook

CS010212

"Thanks ever so much for sending me the rewritten version of your 'HOW' book. I read it again with great pleasure. As you may imagine, I have quite a collection of these phonics readers by now, but yours has a very special place. So clear, so lucid, so simple. You have produced one of the most beautiful solutions to the problem."

--- Rudolf Flesch

"During this hour [with HOW materials] I have learned more about how to teach reading than in all my graduate courses put together."

— in-service elementary teacher

"I was really impressed with your book, "HOW". It is so systematic. I can remember my language arts method course in college. Very little of it was of help in actually teaching children. We do not need to complicate learning. How beneficial it would have been to have had this little book as a new teacher!"

— elementary school principal

"A significant contribution to the field.

--ERIC: Educational Resources Information Center

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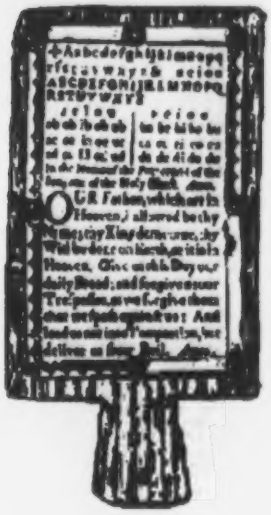
How the Alphabet Works

A Handbook for Teaching Someone to Read
Based upon the 15th Century Hornbook



"Every useless aid arrests development." ~~ Montessori

Fourth Edition

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By Elaine Acker Albert

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A Hornbook for the 20th Century

Introduction

The most important school subject is learning to read. The most important person in a child's schooling is the person who teaches him HOW to read.

Most of us have forgotten how we learned to read. In modern graded classrooms the older children cannot watch the younger children in their early lessons as once they could in a one-room schoolhouse. The process of how one learns to read has become mysterious.

Our ancestors taught their children how to read at home, before school entry, using the world's oldest tools-- hornbook and fescue, systematic basic phonics. At home their children could have all the advantages of one-to-one instruction, private tutoring. The work could be "child-centered" to an extent no school can hope to attain. Today's parents shy away from this task. They don't know how. They aren't experts. Our ancestors weren't experts either, but they did know HOW because everyone could watch the process going on as each new child came along needing to read.

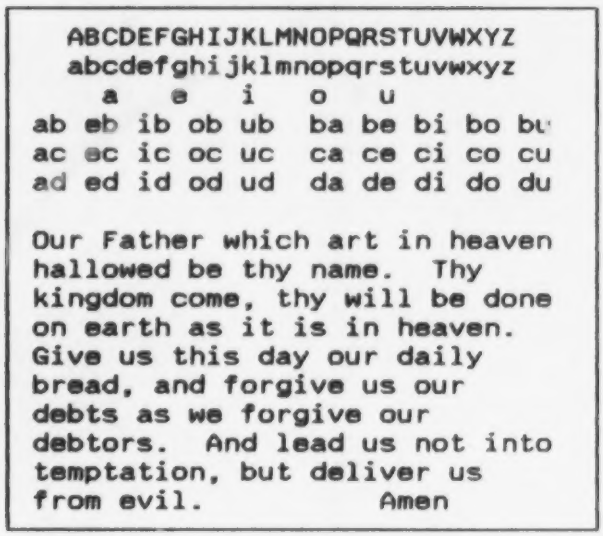
Many teachers today have never seen a Phonics-First system for beginners. Most schools today still use the look-say or whole-word method, talking about pictures, drilling with flashcards, guessing at words in a story, filling in workbooks, with only incidental phonics.

Systematic phonics is considered old-fashioned. Yet research supports phonics as the most successful method of teaching reading. (See the bibliography in this HOW and the Congressional Report of March 20, 1986.) "Look-say" only came into use during the 1920's. After 50 years of look-say, we now have a large percentage of parents who cannot read aloud to their own children, not to mention teaching them the phonics those parents never had. Employers are complaining of illiteracy.

How to fix it? There is an answer that is both sad and yet offers hope: Do it at home. For parents who would like to teach their children to read, here's HOW, some simple steps to make sure that Johnny and Mary learn how to use phonics from the beginning. This program will also be useful to those who wish to help older children and adult illiterates, though that will usually take much longer.

Happily the Phonics-First outlined in HOW can be taught without special materials, simply by using paper and pencil, or blackboard. The cost is not much. The price is in knowledge, patience, and will.

Elaine Albert, 1989



ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

a	e	i	o	u
ab	eb	ib	ob	ub
ac	ec	ic	oc	uc
ad	ed	id	od	ud

ba	be	bi	bo	bu
ca	ce	ci	co	cu
da	de	di	do	du

Our Father which art in heaven
hallowed be thy name. Thy
kingdom come, thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread, and forgive us our
debts as we forgive our
debtors. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us
from evil. Amen

This is the face of a hornbook. A single sheet of paper was fastened to a wooden paddle and covered with a protective sheet or varnish to guard it from finger marks. Paper was costly long ago.
For hundreds of years these little hornbooks taught people how to read. Shakespeare learned how to read by using a hornbook. So did George Washington. Hornbooks were part of the cargo in those tiny ships that brought the first settlers to America. Hornbooks traveled in the covered wagons that carried literacy to our western shores. Hornbooks disappeared only when paper became more affordable.

The face of a hornbook contained:

1) Two alphabets (to show how the letters look), with vowels separated out;
2) A syllabary (each syllable to be turned into a word by adding one more consonant and "sounding out");
3) A familiar prayer, already memorized, to recite and "read" aloud, watching the letters do their work.

A great many people, for hundreds of years, learned how to read by using a hornbook.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Lost Secrets of Learning to Read.

How to Prevent a Child from Discovering Basic Phonics for Himself.

WHY: The Grandmothers' Question.

"Nonsense cloaked in high-sounding scholarly language is still nonsense." ---Frank Rhodes

Lost Secrets of Learning How to Read

1. It can take longer to learn the letters of the alphabet than it takes to learn how to read. However, very little children delight to ask, "What's that?" and this can include the letters of the alphabet, first capitals, then small. Thus when school time comes, all the letters are old friends.

2. The short vowel sounds are best learned first, at the very beginning of reading lessons. Yes, this is one of the hardest parts of the job. It may take longer to learn these short vowels than it takes to learn all the rest of the phonics. A good reason for beginning with the short vowels is that 62% (that's almost two-thirds) of all English syllables contain the short vowel-- so that mastery of these permits the learner to figure out thousands of words right away. The short vowel sounds:

a - as in apple
e - as in elephant
i - as in igloo
o - as in ox
u - as in umbrella

3. The short vowels can be taught paired with single consonants, as in the syllabary on a hornbook--

ab eb ib ob ub ba be bi bo bu

This eliminates the problem called "grunting phonics" so that there is no "buh" grunt in trying to read "bat"
(not buh-at, duh-ig;but ba-t, di-g).

4. From the first the learner needs to observe that the **LETTERS** in the word are read from left-to-right. Thus, ab is not ba; the word "was" differs from "saw", from left-to-right. Activities which cause the learner's attention to jump about, as in looking back and forth between text and pictures, interrupt this left-to-right sequence and may produce "linear dyslexia,"-- i.e. failure of the habit of reading a row of letters from left-to-right.

5. The use of a **FESCUE** (originally a straw, as in broomstraw) will assist the beginner to bring his attention to the sequence of the letters that make up the word. Pointing with the finger is better than no pointing at all, but a finger is too fat, whereas a fescue points to a single letter, thus guiding the eye from left-to-right, letter by letter. There is reason to believe that the learner who is using his hand to guide his fescue is assisting his eye co-ordination.

6. Digraphs must be taught (sh, th, ch, ph, wh,-ng), for these represent sounds not included in our alphabet. It is not necessary, however, to teach "blends" (bl,tr,sm,scr, etc.) for with the fescue the learner can sound out each letter in its turn as he comes to it, left-to-right.

7. The old hornbook included the Lord's Prayer, to provide a text which the learner already knew by heart so that he could fescue his way through the text as he recited it out loud, watching the letters doing their work. Some previously memorized verses or other familiar text can give the learner confidence as he fescues his way through it. Users of the old hornbook graduated from that single sheet to reading the Bible, often because that was the only book available. For some beginners, reading the Bible offers a semi-familiar text for encouragement. In other cases the learner may practice his early reading on familiar nursery tales. These long-loved stories contain helpful repetition, but also genuine plot.

8. The learner needs to read aloud to a mentor who will hold the fescue at any point where an error occurs until that error is corrected. Having the learner read aloud can be a check for accuracy and provide opportunity for encouragement. Furthermore, the learner's intonations will throw light on his grasp of the meaning, serving as a testing device far beyond the possibilities in "workbooks."

9. One teacher, one child, one book--- this works best. This makes possible the use of the fescue while it eliminates competition, anxiety, and haste. One teacher we know found a way to fit this into her busy schedule. During the class's silent reading time, she walks quietly about the room, stopping now and again to tap a child on the head, whereupon the child reads aloud softly for the teacher. This involves no wasted time shuffling chairs, arranging groups, and permits the teacher advantages ordinarily reserved to a tutor.

10. Phonics is a brief subject. It comes to an end. Its goal is "automaticity", that is, application of phonic knowledge, rapidly, below the level of consciousness, for real reading. Montessori speaks of "sensitive periods" in child development. One of these periods seems to come at Age Seven. Seven-year-olds are often compulsive readers. They read anything and everything that comes handy, from cereal boxes to repeated readings of favorite classics. The child who has not mastered phonics early enough loses this natural period in which practicing his skill is what he is peculiarly ready to do, at Age Seven.

How to Prevent a Child from Discovering Basic Phonics for Himself:

1. Train the child to look at each word as a chunk, a whole word at a time. Use flash cards.

2. Encourage guessing. Use pictures to interrupt the left-to-right sequence of the text.

3. Accept false readings such as "pony" for "horse; "dish" instead of "bowl", etc.

4. Do not let the child point to the letters, left-to-right. Have him sit on his hands to prevent pointing. Excuse reversals (was/saw; b/d) by calling these birth defects.

5. Conduct the class as silent reading. Oral reading exposes errors.

6. Reward speedy reading with flash cards and timed tests. Offer only brief selections for short attention.

7. Delay teaching the short vowel sounds till second or third grade on the grounds that these are too difficult.

8. Offer an early mix of words based, not on phonic principles, but on frequency-of-use. This will insure that there will be a higher-than-normal proportion of phonic irregularity, right at the start.

9. Do not let the child watch the page while you read aloud. Sit facing him as in a schoolroom, not side-by-side as with mother-and-child.

10. Give him first-reading books with simple-minded sentences where the "story" is told in the pictures. Hold back on fairy tales, animal stories, and nursery tales until he has outgrown them.

11. During this time, to prevent home interference, send home report cards telling parents that the child is doing just fine, is up-to-grade-level, etc. If parents complain about his not reading, explain that the schoool is using advanced knowledge about children's Readiness, that you are carefully protecting the child from being pushed. Warn parents not to interfere.

Some "gifted" children will discover phonics in spite of these precautions. Many others will need remedial classes and adult illiteracy programs, later.

Illiteracy: How Did We Get There?

Daily the media remind us that the U.S. has a severe illiteracy problem. How did this start? Why did it start? What keeps it going, and who's to blame? It seems that this information-- as well as the story on how to teach your kid to read-- should be in the hands of every American.

Let's start by summarizing it quickly.

To begin with, for millenia the reading of all alphabetic languages has been taught in exactly the same way. This is called 'phonics' and consists simply of the observation that the letters of the alphabet represent sounds; and that written material can be 'decoded' into speech by repeating these sounds in the order that the letters were written.

Not phonetics, please. That is something else. Both words have been used by 'educationists' (again, not the same thing as 'teachers') as a sop to people who knew there used to be something called phonics that worked, but did not know enough about it to tell if it was really being taught.

There are languages, notably Chinese, the Kanji form of Japanese, and AMESLAN (American Sign Language) which operate on a different principle: that visual symbols stand directly for the ideas behind the words rather than sounds that in turn correspond to the spoken form of the language. We regularly use a handful of such visual symbols-for-ideas, such as: $, +, x, =, %, &; but these are only a tiny variation from our alphabetic writing.

There are other languages for which phonics works better or worse, based on how much the spoken language has changed since spelling rules were set down. For example, in Spanish, phonics works almost perfectly; also Italian and Russian. English, having had an unusually turbulent linguistic history, is relatively riddled with exceptions, but it is still a phonic language with exceptions, not an idiographic language like Chinese. The only appropriate way to teach it is still the way the code actually works-- phonically, with some extra patience for the exceptions.

The truth is that English isn't THAT bad. 85% of the words are completely phonic, and 100% have some phonic clues to help you along. And while many of the nasties are relatively common words, that just means you learn them all the quicker.

Now, what has been taught in the public schools for much of this century is something called 'look-say' or the 'whole-word' method, which is based on the idea that you can learn to associate the whole 'picture' of a word with an idea, as the Chinese do. If you ask why, you will probably hear one of two explanations. Both are false, although the teacher who answers your question probably was told one of them in college and honestly believes it. The first is that "English isn't phonetic," which we have pretty well disposed of above. English IS phonic, it just has a lot of irregularities laid over the basic pattern. The second explanation is that the children are being taught to gather meaning rapidly, as adults do. This is also nonsense-- the way you learn adult reading skills is by putting a lot of practice on top of a solid theoretical foundation. We'll come back to that later; for now notice that you don't start learning to walk with the 100-meter dash, either.

"Look-say" was actually invented in the middle of the 19th Century by Thomas Gallaudet, the famous teacher of the deaf, as an approach to teaching reading to people who have no conception of the sounds the letters represent. Later in that century, it was picked up by some educators in Boston who thought it sounded interesting and 'progressive'. It was tried in the public schools there over a seven-year period, and was an absolute disaster. In fact, the experiment was effectively ended by a revolt of the teachers. Boston went back to phonics, the reading problem disappeared, and that should have been the last anyone ever heard of 'look-say' outside of an education history course.

Enter the villains....

Around the beginning of the 20th century there was a group of philosophers and educators, of whom the best known is John Dewey. These gentlemen were basically socialists, and believed that the function of education was not to develop each individual to his or her highest potential as a free citizen, but to mold the individual to the service of the State as an uncomplaining cog in a smoothly-functioning machine. (Notice that people who think this way have to be fairly subtle about it these days, but for some years preceding WWII, it was relatively fashionable, at least in academic circles.) Anyway, Dewey and friends observed that the single biggest impediment to educating this sort of citizen-automaton was literature, which tended to inculcate all sorts of notions about freedom and individual rights and other complications for a socialist state.

Well, they recognized right off the bat that civilization had become too complex to continue running if they just stopped teaching people to read entirely, even if they could get away with it. People would still need to be able to read signs, directions, and so forth. And, they weren't about to get enough clout to start burning libraries in the near future. So what remained was to see if they could find, and sell to the educational establishment, a method of reading instruction that produced poor readers-- people who could get about in society but who would never willingly curl up with a set of The Great Books for entertainment and enlightenment.

You guessed it-- someone came across the accounts of the disastrous Boston experiment, and it was just what they were looking for. The next step was to write some books explaining why this was really the best way to go about teaching reading, explaining away some of the difficulties that might be encountered, and selling them to the establishment. It wasn't hard-- remember, these were scholars of international reputation, and socialism was still perceived as being sort of enlightened and humanitarian, rather than diabolical.

And they turned out to be lucky. A person normally learns to read at about age 4-5, which is too young for them to remember much about how it happened. By the 20th century people were already learning to read in schools rather than in the extended family at home, so the only way anyone would find out how to go about teaching someone else to read would be to study the technique in school. So, all that was needed was to change the curriculum of the teaching colleges, and keep the pressure on until the generation of teachers who knew what had been taught before had all retired, and then the experimenters were home free. Parents were beginning to suspect that something was wrong, but very few people actually knew the older method. The teacher revolt experienced in the Boston experiment was evidently drowned out in the general hoopla about producing 'well-adjusted' children.

As it turned out, 'well-adjusted' came to be more valued than 'educated', with falling SAT scores and all the rest as the end result.

Dewey and friends turned out to be amazingly lucky, because something else has happened that covers their tracks beautifully, and which they could not have known about at the turn of the century. When the problem of kids not learning to read reached the magnitude of a national scandal, naturally all sorts of reading specialists (who were naturally not 'in' on what had really been going on; in fact the original perpetrators were all safely dead)-- the new specialists started studying the remedial kids to see what the problem was. Some of these knew about phonics, and naturally they tried this to see if methodology was at fault. Lo and behold, it didn't work! In fact, no methodolgy turned in anything like acceptable results at teaching the kids who had failed the normal curriculum, to read later. (By this time these kids were 9 or 10 years old. Remember this, it turns out to be important.)

So, the specialists concluded that it must be a neurological problem. Checking the neurology texts turned up a word for a problem where a stroke or accident victim, who had once been able to read. has lost a pre-existing ability to read, similar to "aphasia" where the ability to speak and understand speech is lost. This once-obscure medical term has now become familiar to everyone-- "dyslexia".

I don't know why people supposed that it was reasonable that vast numbers of Americans-- I think total illiteracy is running at 15-20% and some reading impairment more like 50-70%-- should be congenitally brain-damaged in this particular fashion while 99% literacy is routine in other 'developed' countries. I suspect we are to some degree a nation of hypochondriacs, secretly pleased to be assailed by a mysterious new illness with a Greek name. It also provided an 'easy out' explanation for an education system that by this time was demonstrably making a monumental botch of their job.

But, it turns out there is a better explanation. Our brains have two halves: the left-hemisphere is the language side; the right-hemisphere is the picture side. If people are taught to read phonically, the symbolic-logic left side of the brain winds up taking on the task, and does well at it. If people are taught look-say-- regardless of whether this is appropriate (as in Chinese) or inappropriate (as in English) to the language at hand, the pattern-recognition right-hemisphere gets the job. Proof of this comes from Japan, where two systems of writing are in use: Kanji-picture writing, and Katakama-alphabetic writing. If a Japanese has a right-brain stroke, he becomes dyslexic in Kanji and retains Katakana capability, while if he has a left-brain stroke (which would leave an English-speaker totally dyslexic) he loses only the Katakana and can still read and write in Kanji.

The real nastiness arises here. The brain decides at a fairly young age which hemisphere it is going to use for learning to read. After the age of nine or so, the brain has become 'set in its ways' about this and will not pick up another pattern. Hence, you get maybe two shots at teaching a kid to read: There is the 'right time', say age 4-6 or so. If you have a kid who didn't learn the first time around, and get right at the remedial training (using phonics, of course) in the 6-8 timeframe, you can still teach the reading skills (although of course you can not make up for the lost time in the kid's education). If, however, you follow the prevailing philosophy of 'let everybody develop at his own rate' and don't get serious about remedial training until high school or worse, you are going to encounter not merely a person whose attitude has gone sour from lost education and years of inferiority in the classroom, but also a brain which has physically gone out of the learning-to-read business. You will wind up diagnosing him as 'dyslexic' just as if he'd suffered a conk on the head-- which in a very real sense he has, at the hands of Mr. Dewey's latter-day unwitting tools.

Notice the essential point here that, while most of what is currently described in the schools as 'dyslexia' is not curable, it is preventable by sufficiently early exposure to phonics, whether or not the child is also 'taught' by the look-say method.

> *[When the label "dyslexic" fell into disfavor, other labels took its place,-- "learning disabled", "specific language disability",-- LD's, SLD's.]*

What is one to do about all this? Well, if you are enough of a zealot there is a message here that needs spreading. If you aren't in the zealot business, you can still make sure that the children around you get knowledge of phonic principles before they get too old to absorb them-- preferably before they even get to school; get the job done right the first time. It does not take years and years and lots of special materials to teach reading, unless you are trying to do it one word at a time. In the phonic approach, the child learns some basic principles, gets some help with exceptional words, and thereafter (with a bit of intensive practice) can simply read anything his education equips him to uderstand, with no concepts like grade level. (In fact, a properly trained reader can struggle through material he can't understand, e.g. reading a specialized textbook to a blind person!).

The necessary practising happens all by itself at around age seven, if the child is sufficiently grounded in phonics by then. The child goes through a stage of devouring anything in print-- a good set of storybooks is best, but if old newspapers and the backs of cereal boxes are what's available they get read. When this stage is over, the adult reading skills mentioned above have replaced the business of sounding out every word.

So what has taken this message so long to spread? The ultimate irony of all this may be that epidemic 'dyslexia', the greatest of all 'Communist plots', may have transformed itself into a 'Capitalist plot'. I don't have any evidence, but Watergate's 'Deep Throat' gave us a very shrewd piece of advice in suggesting that we find out where the money goes. It turns out that look-say required vastly more complicated and expensive teaching materials than phonics, which makes it attractive to publishers. Also it provides employment for teachers for years of a student's education, instead of just a few weeks, which makes it attractive to the Teachers' Union-- sorry, National Education Association (NEA). And finally, this whole national disgrace provides employment for battalions of researchers and assorted academics, for whom a quick and effective solution would mean having to find some other way to justify their existence-- let alone the embarrassment that would ensue if it turned out that the answer had been common practice for centuries.

One of the problems that many people will have with the above is that it is not, indeed, the right answer for absolutely everybody. There are still the deaf, there are people who are 'legitimately' dyslexic from head injuries or strokes, and there are people who for one reason or another are deficient in brain capacity from birth. For these people, phonics at four and turn 'em loose in the library doesn't work and isn't the answer. Two comments can be made from this. First, the existence of a very small number of learning disabled in no way constitutes a reason to warp the entire reading curriculum. The right thing to do in the schools is to expose all the children early-on to phonics as the basic method of learning to read, and then examine secondary methods with the remedial cases as they reveal themselves, not the other way around which as we have seen places everyone's proper neurological development at risk.

The second observation I would offer is not about method, but about emphasis. Nearly everyone I have talked to in recent years who was interested in education was primarily interested in 'Special Education'. Special Ed is defined as targeting the problems and opportunities of the gifted and the handicapped, but in practice deals nearly 100% with the handicapped, which is where much of the funding for education is also channeled. That we as a society are willing to make this investment says much in our favor as human beings. However, to make it our educational priority when we still have unsolved general problems is the wrong thing for us, both as individuals and as a country. In general, our competitive strength as a nation is related to the attention paid to the education of our best and brightest-- and make no mistake about it, they are competing with the best and brightest of other countries that do believe in singling them out for special treatment. On the other hand, our strength as a free society is related to the quality of education provided to our average citizens-- in large part the capacity of the vast majority to understand its own history and literature. There is ample room here to argue which of these two groups should get first priority and which second; I don't propose to tackle that issue. It is also perfectly true that the ideal of raising all of our students to their maximum potentials, even those whose potentials are very limited, is a noble one-- but helping the stragglers to catch up should be education's last priority, not its first. We have far too much unfinished business with the education of the bright and average individuals to allow ourselves to be distracted by the problems of the least able to the extent that we have been, however challenging and uplifting it may be.

I suspect that some of this choice of Special Ed by the prospective teachers comes from the fact that many-- by no means all-- of the teachers in our educational system tend to come from the lower ability ranks rather than the higher. Anyone can feel that they are giving a helping hand to the handicapped, while gifted students with good backgrounds are quite capable of giving many teachers the willies. This is a problem that requires significant changes in social attitudes to fix.

Teachers do not choose to fail. Our brightest and best want to enter occupations where they can succeed. Successful teaching is a very rewarding experience, quite apart from the pay rate. First grade teachers want to succeed in teaching the children to read, promptly and across-the-board. High school teachers want to succeed in teaching in students who are able to read mature prose. What do our brightest and best see when they look at school-teaching today as an occupational choice?

We see the wisdom of using our best grain for seed; would the logic be any different if we employed our most skilled individuals as teachers?

--from private correspondence
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Hunter Diack: In Spite of the Alphabet [Chatto & Windus, London, 1965]

Kathryn Diehl: Johnny Still Can't Read-- But You Can Teach Him at Home [Reading Reform Foundation, Tacoma, WA 98402. 1979]

WHY?

When did today's illiteracy overtake us?
How Did This Happen to the Teaching of Reading?
These are the questions that the grandmothers ask. When the children early in this century went to school they all learned how to read, with phonics first. If a pupil did not learn how to read in first grade, he was held back to repeat the grade. Being able to read was a simple intelligence test in those days. Everybody above the level of feeble-minded could learn to read. Some of our Representatives in Washington also want to know what happened. Here's part of their answer:

OVERSIGHT ON ILLITERACY IN THE UNITED STATES:

[Hearing before the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education of the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives, held in Washington, D.C., March 20, 1986. Hon. Augustus F.Hawkins presiding; Senator Edward Zorinsky, guest moderator. Excerpts:]

p. 3 "The majority of our schools are not using proven methods of teaching reading, as evidenced by the report of the Commission on Reading, Becoming a Nation of Readers. Ironically, almost all of the basal programs sold by the large publishers are more expensive and less effective than other methods which will be described here today... We must ask why they continue to use these types of ineffective methods. I believe this is a clear case of conflict-of-interest. In 'The Great American Reading Machine,' Prof.David Yarington blames our reading ills on interlocking self-interests of national, State, and local education departments; publishers, particularly of basal readers; education professors; and unsuspecting teachers.
Even with the publication of Becoming a Nation of Readers, schools are not jumping on the bandwagon to improve their methods of teaching reading. I believe this is because they still do not have sufficient information to choose the best ones."

-- Senator Zorinsky

p.6 "We still come back to the question, Why do educators bury this reading and literacy problem? The International Reading Association was founded in 1956, founded by a coalition of people deeply involved in the writing and publishing of whole-word reading materials. This association has, over the years, augmented its influence to where it is virtually the only game in town as far reading practices and pedagogy are concerned. It very largely influences what is taught in the teacher training institutions." --Charles M. Richardson

p.10 "We're talking about preventing reading failure, using the old ounce of prevention principle. Let's engineer the system, train the regular first and second grade teachers to do it right the first time. The track record of remedial reading is its own condemnation. School systems that have switched to phonic-intensive methods not only are seeing higher scores, but reduced costs of materials
The turnaround will not happen unless those of us who understand the situation speak out."

--Charles M. Richardson (engineer-tutor)

p.75 "All the evidence points to the fact that conditioned reflexes are established to the left angular gyrus [of the brain] for print read as sound [phonics], but to the right angular gyrus for print read as pictures or sight words [look-say]. Mixed dominance is very undesirable. To use Samuel Blumenfeld's terms, we are jamming the reflexes in children's brains."

--Geraldine E. Rogers

Elsewhere, Dr. Barabara Bateman of the University of Oregon has used some harsh words, calling the failure of the schools to use the phonics programs, which have taught all the children to read, as being either "negligent or malicious".

Negligent? Malicious? These are strong words!

Costs?

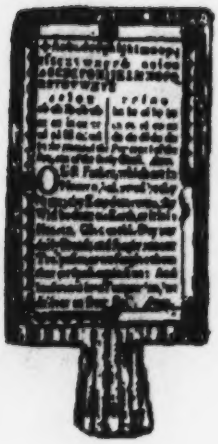
The phonic primers exist. Some of the ones the Congressional Committee heard about, on that March 20 day, are listed here in the bibliography of this BOW. It is not a question of needing more money: teaching with basic phonics actually costs less! Superintendent Charles Micciche reported to that House Committee that when his schools in New Hampshire switched from look-say programs to phonics, the per-pupil costs dropped from $16 to less than $3 per child, even including some children's literature books; and that thereafter his schools made the best reading scores in the State.

WHY this nation-wide illiteracy problem? And how to fix it? There is an answer that is both sad and yet offers hope: Do it at home. The tools are here, ancient tools of proven success. They do not cost money. Their price is in knowledge, patience, and will.

HOW

to teach someone to read
by beginning with

Systematic Phonics



"For a penny you may buy the hardest book in the world, one which at some time or other hath perplexed the greatest clerks in the land, to wit, a hornbook."

--Henry Peacham 1664

HOW.

The most important subject in a child's education is learning to read. The most important person in a child's education is the one who teaches him to read.

If you want to help someone learn to read, here's how. To teach a beginner is to start with a clean slate. To help someone who has already failed means to show him the things he missed somewhere along the line. For him the learning is much more difficult because that person is discouraged, has bad reading habits, and will need lots more patience and encouragement. But you can do it.

PART ONE: The Alphabet

Learning to read begins with the alphabet, starting with the capital letters (which are easier), then the lower case letters, which have some reversals. You can find letters everywhere--in newspaper headlines, on road signs, canned goods, children's blocks, ABC books, all around. In some ways, learning the letters can be the slowest part of the job. It can take a long time. However, little children like to ask, "What's that?" and can readily learn to recognize all the letters before they go to school. When the learner can name most of the capital letters, start on the lower case letters. If the learner gets mixed up between a "b" and a "d", show him what happens if you put the top bump on the letter: which one makes "B"?

It's good to learn the names of the letters, but it is far more helpful to learn the sound for each letter. Name the letters out loud. As you do so you can hear that the name of each letter will tell something about what sound that letter can make in a word. Except for two of them: "H" and "W" don't. Just tell the learner how they sound. Keep the sound as simple as possible: f-f-f m-m-m s-s-s b-b-b. Carefully avoid gruntings such as "buh, kuh, tuh": the extra grunts are not helpful when it comes to reading words.

This HOW is not a workbook, not a primer. It is a manual for a tutor. It assumes that there is plenty of paper and pencil ready at hand. Our ancestors used a slate, remember?

PART TWO: The Five Short Vowels

Show the learner the 5 letters called "vowels". These are a...e...i...o...u. Explain that each of these vowels has two possible sounds: "long" and "short". The "long" vowel sounds the way the name of the letter sounds. We will start with the "short" vowels. These are heard in:

```
a --apple       .../ant, Andy, bag, man, fan...a...
e --elephant    .../eskimo, Edward, red, peg...e...
i --igloo       .../if, Indian, ink, big, tip...i...
o --ox          .../opposite, Otto, box, hop...o...
u --umbrella    .../ugly, Uncle, run, gum, bug...u...
```

Learning the Sounds of these five short vowels is the hardest part of the whole job. Nevertheless, this is the best place to start, and here's why: almost two-thirds of all the syllables in English use the short vowels. That means that when the learner has mastered these, he can read lots of words-- hundreds and hundreds of words. Here's how:

PART THREE: The Syllables

Make some pairs of letters, one vowel, then one consonant, and say them out loud, like this:

```
ab...eb...ib...ob...ub      at...et...it...ot...ut
ax...ex...ix...ox...ux      am...em...im...om...um
```

(All the letters that are not vowels are consonants.) And if the learner happens to notice that you might use some of these to get "rat" or "box" or "mud"----Cheers! Next reverse your pairs of vowel and consonant, being sure that you use only **SHORT** vowels as you say them out loud, to get some like this:

```
ba... be... bi... bo... bu
```

CAREFUL! That's not the word "be", just a piece of a word. It uses the short vowel and could turn into "bed" or "bet" or "beg". More pairs with short vowels:

```
sa...se...si...so.(sox)...su
pa...pe...pi...po...pu
ma...me "(as in "met", not the word "me")"
mi...mo.(mop)...mu
```

Point out to the learner that the letters are always sounded from left-to-right, so that "ab" and "ba" are not the same. Just as we Write the letters from left-to-right, so we have to Read the letters from left-to-right. Surprisingly, a person who has failed in reading may not have noticed this. Tell him. Better yet, guide his eye with a small pointer, like a fescue (straw), one letter at a time, left-to-right.

Now make some sandwich words, starting with one consonant, then one short vowel, then one more consonant. You can make hundreds of them! The learner can make some too.

map	tub	fox	pen	jet	zip
sox	rub	dig	log	sap	

On and on. You can use paper and pencil, a blackboard, some Scrabble letters, children's ABC blocks; you can even make words with your finger in the wet sand on the beach or in some flour spread out on a cookie pan. Encourage the learner to play with these sandwich words. You can even make some dumb sentences:

Cat bit rat. Rat ran. Tom hit Gus. Gus is mad.

Spelling does not help. Consider the hurdle of shifting from "aitch-aye-tee" to "hat" or "double-you-eye-jee" to "wig". Don't name the letters for now. Just use the Sounds.

After a while try the learner on some long words, all with short vowels. Take the word letter-by-letter, left-to-right, slowly at first, then speeded up till the learner hears the word:

hippopotamus octopus benefit electric difficult
political level fantastic president

There is good reason to take lots of practice at this point first: because these short vowels are difficult and secondly: because the short vowels are used in so large a portion of all we read.

To make some more interesting sentences, it helps to show the learner two words that do not behave as expected: the words "a" and "the":

Ed had a bat.
The big bag had a bug in it.
The cop hit the bandit.
The cat fed a kit.
The bandit ran at the cop.
The cop had a camera.

"Sound it out, dear," said Grandma.
And use a pointer.

"Grandma's gone to the Senior Citizens Home,
taking the culture with her." --Exchange student from Somaliland

EXERCISE: The Short Vowels

Add one consonant to make a word. Then read your results out loud.

pan	nu	ra	ho	bi	ge	sa	bu	te	po
ja	fi	ne	mu	ma	co	ha	bi	gu	fa
la	ta	ti	to	te	ni	ri	cu	va	je
zi	su	re	ye	me	ra	si	ba	ne	mo

The short "e" is the most difficult for most learners to hear and say just right:

elephant exercise expect excellent engine effort

Now the learner can discover that he can make-- and read-- dozens of these simple sandwich words! And not all of them "primer words" either: jet, zip, gum, cop, hep, bug, pop, dig, rap, keg, gag, sap, nut, bum, zig-zag..... The learner can enjoy a lot of success, right here.

At this point you can even make some dumb sentences:

Rat has a hat.
Nan bit Sam.
Fat Dan can pat a big pig.
Tim can tag Sis.
Meg got a pin.
Can Meg jab Liz?
The dog got in the mud.
Did the dog get wet? Yes.
The dog sat on the map.
End of the map.

What can you make? Sure they're stupid. But you can make dozens of these little dumb sentences.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

The goal is not to read words,
but to figure out HOW to read words!

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Remember:
At This Point we are not concerned about gaining wisdom from a book.
First comes practice with the alphabetic code.
Literature must wait a bit."

For a pleasant end to these first sessions, a bit of poetry goes well. If it is something the learner has already memorized, he can recite it as he points to the letters:

Jack and Jill went up a hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

There are words here of course that are not explainable by what the learner knows so far. No matter. He knows the piece by heart and can see how at least some of it works.

On the old hornbook, the Lord's Prayer was used for this first reading-- a text already known by heart. Our ancestors next used the Bible as their first reading book. It was often the only book in the house. Furthermore, it had this advantage: some passages, were already familiar, some even memorized, to help the beginning reader along.

If there seems to be nothing the learner already knows by heart, select a short bit of verse and read it aloud to him-- while pointing, letter by letter-- over and over till he almost knows it by heart and can follow the text as you read it together. Stevenson's:

The rain is raining all around.
It falls on field and tree.
It rains on the umbrellas here
And on the ships at sea.

Use whatever you have! Poetry, songs, nursery rhymes, Mother Goose, jingles, ads... Let it be play, moving lightly along. Do not worry about rules or exceptions: you are "reading" something you already know by heart!

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<u>Goof Offs</u> (also can be called "sight words")
Some words goof off. The sensible way to spell "does" would be "duz". Here are a few more that goof off. (It's fun to write some of them as if they were sensible!)
was "wuz" what "wot" one "wun" you to two
It is possible to write more sentences if you can use just a few of these goofy words.
~~~~~~

PART FOUR: The Digraphs

There are not enough letters in our alphabet for all the sounds we make when we talk. We use some pairs of letters for special sounds. Like this:

sh... not "s", not "h", but the sound as in "shoe"
th... not "t", not "h", but the sound as in "thumb"
ch... not "c", not "h" but as in "church"
ng is heard on the end of "bang, ring, gong"
also ph" may stand in for "f", and "qu" for "kw"

These pairs are called "consonant digraphs" ("di" means 2: two letters making only one sound) . Now the learner can make some more words using these pairs. Like this:

that this them ship shop shell chip chop

or on the ends of words, like this:

mash cash much rush fish with sing catch

Take some time for the learner to play with all the new words he can make with short vowels, consonants, and consonant digraphs. Maybe make a few sentences? It is also a great idea to let the learner find what words he can read in the newspaper or in any books that are handy.
Does the learner know any songs by heart? He can, with some help, work his way through the printed text of something he knows by heart and thus actually see how the letters are doing their work. For this, use a fescue-pointer, gliding from letter to letter as the learner pronounces the words out loud.

Rock-a-bye baby, on the tree top
When the wind blows the cradle will rock.

Lazy Mary, will you get up, will you get up,
Will you get up?
Lazy Mary, will you get up, will you get up today?

This little pig went to market.
This little pig stayed home.
This little pig had roast beef.
This little pig had none.
This little pig cried wee-wee-wee, all the way home.

About that fescue pointer:-- Some children have been scolded for pointing. Some have been required to sit on their hands so they can't point. Pointing helps-- when you're a beginner. When pointing slows the reader down he'll discard the fescue all by himself.

EXERCISE: digraphs.

The alphabet was invented a long time before there was any English language. As various languages have adopted the alphabet, they have made adjustments to suit their special needs. English has needed some letters that aren't in the alphabet and has used pairs of letters as substitutes for the missing sounds: sh...th...ch...wh.

Add one consonant to make a word. Read your results out loud.

ship chi sho whe tha cho shu cha thi

Add one of these digraphs (sh... th... ch...) to each of the following and read your results out loud:

mu ca pa ri di ma ru wi

Another digraph is -ng which never occurs at the beginning of an English word. Put -ng on these and read aloud:

swi ri ba cla ra stro ga bri thi wi

In English "qu-" sounds like "kw-". Read aloud:

quick quit quiz quack quilt

We also sometimes use "ph" instead of "f":

alphabet elephant phonics dolphin

EXERCISE: Big Words!

Copy the first word. Sound it out, together, tutor and learner, letter by letter, left-to-right. When the learner recognizes the word, let him copy the next word, and so on

gravity	hippopotamus	arithmetic	sandwich
problem	rubbish	bathtub	construct
happiness	octopus	helicopter	rocket
selfish	chipmunk	kitchen	

You and the learner can make some more sandwich words using these digraphs, and then it will be possible to make even more sentences, still simple, still dumb, but it takes practice!

> The octopus will not fit in the bathtub.
> Is gravity a problem with a hippopotamus?
> The big box in the kitchen has rubbish in it.
> Did the chipmunk construct a nest in the attic.

(That word "construct"-- now there's a challenge! But it is made strictly of elements learned so far. Take it letter-by letter. Be sure to say "Whee!" when the learner figures it out.)

What are you reading now? No, the learner cannot yet read alone. But you can read together. Let the learner read as much as he can figure out, at this point, and the tutor fills in the rest, always pointing as you go. Mostly teachers talk too much.

A happy choice can be to read one of the books from early childhood which the learner practically knows by heart. But now the idea is to watch the words,-- fescue in hand,-- to see how the letters are doing their work. (At this point the learner may actually resent the presence of illustrations and want the pictures covered up!)

For an older learner there are other choices: today's newspaper; a familiar advertisement; a few sentences from some technical material in which the adult has an interest. The learner figures out what he can, so far; the tutor fills in, slowly, always pointing letter-by-letter.

So far, the Exercise pages are all practice with the short vowels only. It may take longer to master these five short vowels than to learn all the rest of the phonics!

Here is a nasty little game to play: Let the tutor point to "tub" and say, "This is 'but.'" ten/net pat/tap lap/pal pot/top gum/mug nap/pan. Encourage contradiction. To miscall "was/saw" is to read backwards! Tell the learner we read English from left-to-right, always! Some languages are read in columns, top to bottom. English is read, letter-by-letter, left-to-right. (See the Analphabetic chapter, item 6). When the learner is able, in this game, to grab the fescue and prove that he is Right and his tutor is Wrong! -- the teacher will have taken a big step on the way to the true teacher's goal: to make herself useless.[An older student may be amused to hear that the Greeks and Romans for a time experimented with boustrophedon writing,-- alternating direction, over and back, line by line. They gave that up, long ago.]

Use lots of paper and pencil work on all this. Or perhaps Scrabble letters? Want more help thinking up words? See the end of Why Johhny Can't Read (Rudolf Flesch 1955) for lists of words systematicatically arranged by phonic complexity.
Of his 72 pages, the first 23 are all short vowels only. Note: Flesch's later book, Why Johhny STILL Can't Read does not include these lists. But you and the learner can think up your own by just using the alphabet.

PART FIVE: Blends?

Instead of a simple sandwich, some words can have extra consonants before and after the vowel. Take these words letter-by-letter from left-to-right, slowly at first, then speeded up till the learner recognizes the word. Sound each letter in its turn. Use a fescue to point to EACH LETTER, left-to-right:

left next dump brush slam string crack drum

What words can learner make by putting extra consonants into the sandwich words? (These extra consonants are sometimes referred to as making "blends". It is not necessary to learn them separately, as the digraphs must be learned, because the learner can work his way through the "blend", with a pointer, letter by letter, left-to-right.)

That fescue, by the way, is not for pointing at words, no! It is for pointing at the letters, one by one.

Add one consonant to make a word:

slap sna spi sto plu sni dra spli twi sle

spo gla clu stra fla flo pla spli ski· fro

Here are some close pairs. Which is which? Read aloud!

stop/spot/pots shelf/shell shrub/scrub brag/grab

from/form blot/bolt left/felt was/saw

track/truck/trick/trunk/tank pitcher/picture pat/tap

Use a fescue - pointer!

Dump the dust in the trash bin with the brush.
Grab the string with the left hand.
Fred left lots of wet sand on the steps.

A good teacher is Fair, Firm, and Friendly. Don't overlook Firm. Firm shows you care.

EXERCISE: Letter-by-Letter, Left-to-Right

Read the following pairs out loud. For each pair tell what makes the difference between the two words.

stop	tub	nap	ten	gum	chin	end	saw	bib
spot	but	pan	net	mug	inch	den	was	did

left	just	pin	swell	mud	plum	was	when
felt	jump	nip	smell	mad	lump	saw	then

Instead of, or in addition to the fescue-pointer, we may use a card with the upper left corner notched out to guide the learner into reading a word from left-to-right. Slide this to prevent him from grabbing the final consonant before he has discovered the beginning. With the notched card we expose only the beginning of the word while the learner figures out how it starts, then follows to the middle, letter-by-letter. Often the ending comes easily. Older remedial students often prefer this notched card to the fescue-pointer

The fescue helps the reader read the letters from left-to-right.

What shall we use for a fescue?

broomstraw...knitting needle... crochet hook... nail...sharpened dowel rod... toothpick... artist's "stump" white lead pencil... letter opener.. quill of a feather... ??

Something to read with mostly short vowels only:

Sam fed his ox bugs.
Did that ox get fat?
That ox got thin!
Sad ox! Bad Sam!
Let's get that ox grass.

Og is a rock. He sits in the sun. He just sits. Og can not swim, flip, hop, belch, dig, kiss, stink, limp, or wink. Og can not fuss or kick or fib or yell. Is Og dull? No. Og is a rock. That's that.

Rip and snip. Tip and drip. Let's be disgusting! Tip the milk. Drip the jam. Rip the pants. Snip the mittens. Let's be disgusting! Kick the dentist. Hit the cat. Yell at Grandma. Drop the dustpan. Smash the cup. Step in the mud. Let's be disgusting!

Columbus had no electrical lamps on his ships. His bad arithmetic led him to think that America is India. But he did travel across the Atlantic and back, difficult as that can be with his dinky ships and lack of maps.

A Skunk, a Frog, and a Rat had a club at the fishpond.
"We can drink the pond," commented the Skunk, "but let us shop for sandwiches,-- fish sandwiches, chicken sandwiches, egg sandwiches, with nuts as snacks."
"Not in this club," sang the Frog.
"Get me a bug sandwich."
"That I will not," contended the Rat.
"Get a bug if you can, but if it is in a sandwich, then not a bit of it for me. Get me a bottle of pop."
"That's bad," yelled the Skunk. "He will get hiccups. Get him a mug of milk."
"Not a bit of it," sassed the Rat."
"O well, let's just drink the fishpond," lamented the Skunk, and he got his fish from the pond.
The Frog got himself a big fat bug, but the Rat just sulked.

Some authorities prefer first reading without pictures. This concentrates attention on the decoding. Yes, these sentences are dull. What the children find exciting is their new power to decode print!

A fat man had a nap on a bus. At the bus stop the fat man did not get off. The bus went on. The fat man missed his stop.

Ellen has a big bag. It can zip up. Ellen had a pen in that bag. That pen spilled ink in Ellen's bag and left a black spot.

Tom has a drum. Tom got his drum from his Dad. It is not a big drum. Tom taps his drum. Tap-tap-rat-a-tap. Rub-a-dub-dub. Tom grins.

Jim has a big red sled. Jim slid on the hill with his sled. The sled hit a bump. Jim fell off. Jim got wet. The sled is O.K.

Jeb did not stop on red. Did a cop nab him? Yes. Jeb got a ticket.

Did Ann smash that glass? Ann must pick up the bits of glass and drop them in the junk bin. Did Ann spill bits of glass in the grass? Pick them up, Ann!

Bob has a popgun. It can snap. Bob hit a hog on the back with his popgun. The hog jumped, but the popgun did not cut the hog's skin. Bob hit a tin can with his popgun. The tin can went "zing" and fell.

Fred has a hat but Bob has a cap. Did Fred drop his hat in the mud? Did Fred grab Bob's cap? Bob did not hit Fred, but Bob did get his cap back.

Tom can swim. Liz can swim. A duck can swim well! Can a hen swim? I can swim. I swam at camp.

Jack can fish at his camp. Jack can drop the fish in his basket. Will the fish flap and tip the basket? Catch it! Grab the fish quick!

Can Bill lift that log? It is a big, thick log. Will Bill drop it with a a bang? No, Bill will chop up the log and then he can lift it.

By the time the learner has worked this far he can figure out one-third of the words on the first page of Charlottes's Web.

PART SIX: Two Vowels

Some words don't have short vowels. We can use a second vowel to make the vowel "long". The second vowel can push the first vowel into saying its alphabetic name. The second one is just pushing, not speaking for itself. Like this:

toad rain tree paid peach pie

What words can the learner make using ...oa...ai...ee...ea in the middle of a sandwich instead of a short vowel?

At this point you may come up with some words that don't work, like "head" or "bear"; if that happens, don't worry. Tell the learner that some English words do not behave as expected. They make a lot of trouble when it comes to spelling, but for now we are talking about learning how to read. Spelling comes later. What we want to do first is learn to read the 85% of all English words that can be sounded out letter-by-letter. And yes, learning to read this way does actually help with spelling,-- later.

As before, it is now possible to add extra consonants to these long-vowel words, like this:

croak greed paint screech roast

When Grandma was in first grade, each child had a little box of letters, printed on one-inch squares, to arrange on the desktop, left-to-right, to make words, or even sentences. It was a quiet time, an absorbing game she remembered years afterwards

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Here are some more Goof-Offs:

said ["sed"]	have ["hav"]	come ["cum"]
where ["wair"]	there ["thair"]	were ["wer"]

EXERCISE: A Two-Vowel Effect.

Sometimes we use two vowels inside a word. The second vowel here makes no sound of its own: it just pushes the first vowel to make it say its alphabetic name. Read aloud.

ee	ea	oa	ie	ay	ai
sweet	scream	soap	tried	way	mail

Which is the long vowel? Why? Read aloud:?

bat	red	peck	net	men	got	pad
bait	read	peek	neat	mean	goat	paid

cot	am	fed	stem	pan	add	ran
coat	aim	feed	steam	pain	aid	rain

PART SEVEN: Final Silent e

The second vowel that pushes the first one into saying its name is not always right beside the vowel it pushes. The second vowel can tag on the end of a sandwich word and change both the sound and the meaning, like this:

not..note can..cane tub..tube cut..cute

Let the learner add an "e" to the end of each of these little words and read the results out loud:

bit... hat... tap... rip... hop... mad... dim... at

Yes, rip up the note, but why bite the pen?
That goat stole a tube of paste.
The toad ate the ripe peach.
Jane came late, but Mike got here on time.

A few words have long vowels standing at the end of the word:

he we she be so go no my try why

And then there's always just plain I. (Is this always capitalized because we are conceited?)

EXERCISE: final silent "e".

Add an "e" to the second word in each pair. The first word in the pair will then have a short vowel sound (as in: apple, elephant, igloo, ox, umbrella), but the second word will have a long vowel that says the same sound as its alphabetic name.
Read your results out loud.

at	cap	hat	rob	cut	hop	mad	can	us	hid
ate	cap	hat	rob	cut	hop	mad	can	us	hid

rip	cub	not	bit	tap	tub	dim	plan	scrap	slop
rip	cub	not	bit	tap	tub	dim	plan	scrap	slop

These long vowels are only the second-most-useful form of the vowels. The short vowels are the ones we really use a lot-- in about two-thirds of all English syllables. That is why learning the short vowels first is the quickest way to start.

EXERCISE: Review
Are these vowels long or short? Why?

back	file	skid	take	bite	pill
bake	fill	slide	tack	bits	pile

pot	cute	left	leaf	sob	home	lock	rain	get

oatmeal	green	loaf	stink	grip	life	way	hole	hot

A cute cub came and stole a scrap from the tent.
Did the cub scrape the dish clean?
Did he leave any scraps for me?
O no, but let's not slap the cub.
Let him go free.

Let's drive to the beach.
Or shall we take the bus?
On the beach we can be in the sunshine.
What shall we take for lunch?
If it rains, that will not be fun.
A picnic is better in the sunshine.
Will this be a fine day to swim?

PART EIGHT: The Long Vowel Rule

So far no "rules" have been mentioned. Here comes a rule:

When two vowels go walking together
the first one does the talking, saying its
alphabetic name.
The second vowel serves as a pusher.
This effect will go through one intervening
consonant but not through two:
the second consonant works like
a screen door to block the pusher effect.

There are exceptions. All rules have exceptions. This rule is nevertheless well worth knowing.
Examples:

hop...hopping	hope...hoping
cut...cutter	cute...cuter

Let the learner tell which of the following are long vowels, which are short, and read them out loud:

sloping..slopping liked..liking..licked holy..holly
dinner..diner supper..super
backing..baking

Here are some words to practice on. Let the learner decide whether the vowel is long or short and tell why:

rack	rake	rain	strip	stripe	stick	his	is
this	these	those	them	that	lock	leaf	
wishing		lifted		tiger	music		

Some "word families" are odd:

old, cold, hold, gold, sold /oeld/
find, mind, grind, kind /kiend/
ball, tall, fall, call, all, wall /tawl/
*wild,child....most,post.....bread,head,...*thief,chief

Notice how "y" works like a vowel at times: navy tiny

EXERCISE: The Long Vowel Rule.

When two vowels go walking
The first one does the talking.
What does the first one say?
    Its alphabetic name.
What does the second vowel say?
    Maybe nothing.
The second vowel pushes the first vowel to make the first one say its name.

This effect will go through one intervening consonant but not through two.
The second consonant works like a screen door, preventing the second vowel from pushing through.

Read aloud. Explain which are long vowels and which are short--- and Why.

hoping	liked	holly	scraps		
hopping	licked	holy	scrape		
supper	skidding	later	dinner	filling	
super	sliding	ladder	diner	filing	
zero	blotter	cozy	hero	cracker	public
tiny	hammer	shady	tiger	lifted	gravy
music	paint	pant			

[The above is a rough rule, and admittedly it doesn't always work Nevertheless, it works often enough to be well worth knowing.]

And then there are those Three Bears.
Why not Three Bairs?
Well, no, not Three Bares.

Yes, there are always Exceptions. But the children seem to humph themselves over the exceptions with surprising ease. It's the grownups who growl and grumble about the exceptions. That's because the grownups have to Write the books and then they have to be able to Spell.

PART NINE: VOWEL COMBINATIONS

Just as there are consonant digraphs, there are some vowel combinations too. Like this:

"ar" can be heard in words like "star...arm...car...part
"or" comes in corn...north...short...more
"aw" or "au" (they sound the same) in auto...awful
"ow" or "ou" as in owl...out...pouch...clown
"oo" may sound in two different ways: moon...good
"oi" or "oy" as in oil...boy...spoil...enjoy
"er", "ir", and "ur" all sound the same: her first nurse

By this time the learner can read much of English. Do not hurry him, and do not let him guess, even if he makes "good" guesses. This is a time for learning how to read what is on the printed page. It is not the time for speed.

On the other hand, just drilling on words can get mighty dull. A better plan is for the tutor and the learner to read aloud together some stories they both enjoy. Either the tutor or the learner can use the fescue, gliding from left-to-right. If the learner makes a mistake, the tutor can simply hold the fescue at that place, without saying anything, and wait for the learner to look again. The learner needs Quiet in which to think.

~~~~~~~~ from AESOP~~~~~~~~~

A serten man had a goose that laid him a Goelden Egg every day
But the man wonted to get the eggs faster.
So he killed the goose and cut her open.
Inside, he found her just like any other goose.

It does not require any vast number of changes in spelling to produce phonic forms.
~~~~~~~~

EXERCISE: Effects of "r"

What words can you find that belong in these groups?

ar	or	er	ir	ur
far	corn	her	first	nurse
start	porch	spider	shirt	fur

In the following put in either "ar" or "or" into the spaces and read your results out loud.

	park			short
sp k	d k	m k	ac rn	h se
h n	h m	f m	c k	st m
th n	b n	b n	sp kle	m ch
co ner		s t	st	sh p

EXERCISE: Vowel Combinations

There are not enough vowels in the alphabet for the English language.Therefore we make some more by combining letters, just as we made consonant digraphs. What words can you find that belong in these groups?

au-aw		ou-ow		oi-oy		ew	oo-oo	
haul	awful	snout	owl	spoil	joy	chew	pool	foot

Sometimes "w" acts as if it were a pusher-vowel, like this:
grow low throw yellow snow

Sometimes we find a group of letters that can be read two ways, like this:
bow... bend over or bow... for tying shoe laces
In this case, the reader tries first one and then the other possibility, and selects the sound that make sense in the sentence.
Happily, words do not normally come in lists!

~~~~~~AESOP~~~~~

A rabbit jeered at a turtle for being so sloe.
But the turtle laffed and sed, "Let's hav a rase.!"
"Cum on then," sed the rabbit.
"Yoo shall see."Thay started at wunse.
The turtle plodded along at a steddy rate.
The rabbit treated the hoel matter as a joke and lay down for a nap.
He considered that it wood be eazy to katch up.
Turtle plodded on.
When rabbit woke up and ran, he found the turtle waiting for him at the goal
~~~~~~

PART TEN: "C" and "G"

The letter "c" is used for two different sounds, one like "s", the other like "k". Here's the rule (the only other rule we will use; the rest are really only spelling rules): If the next letter after "c" is an "e", an "i", or a "y", then the "c" will sound like "s"; otherwise like "k". So:

cat....cent....city....cop....cut....cycle

The letter "g" behaves in similar fashion but not with the same regularity:

gas...get...gelatin...give...magic...got...gum...gym

How can you tell which it will be? Well, since real reading is not just lists of words, there's the rest of the sentence for help Try first one way, then the other. See which one makes sense

EXERCISE: "c"

The letter "c" signals the same sound as "k" most of the time. But if the next letter after the "c" is an "e", an "i", or a "y", then the letter "c" switches over to the sound of "s".Read aloud:

cat	can	crib	Notice both "c"'s!
cent	kettle	crack	bicycle
city	kite	cluck	success
cop	cone	central	accident
cut	cub	credit	cyclone
face	fact	receive	recycle

On a recent occasion a certain Public Official was reading a speech to the local citizens. This is what he read: "The people of our great State want us to secede." The word on his prompter was "succeed". Neither the word "secede" nor "succeed" is a phonic Goof Off, but that speaker sure goofed on his phonics!

EXERCISE: "g"

The letter "g" can behave in similar fashion, but the "g" rule doesn't always work:

"g" as in goat	"g" like a "j"
gave	gentle
get	magic
got	engine
gum	gym

For the following words, try first one way and then the other and listen: what makes sense?

gift hug rag leg egg log

page huge rage ledge edge logic

PART ELEVEN: ti-, ci, si

These can stand in for sh- as in nation,, special, permission.

PART TWELVE: Silent Letters and Other Spooks

The most important thing to know about those Silent Letters is that there are some. Once upon a time long ago people really did pronounce some of these ghost letters. Just for fun, trying saying what you see:

knife knock knee knuckle wrap wreck wrong dumb

comb doubt guess plague build bread heavy

As one young learner said: "You only make that mistake once!"

Sometimes letters switch places: field thief

And then there's that leftover from the past-- "gh"-- which was once a throaty grunt and now doesn't know what to do with itself:

cough laugh enough high
light though through thought.

It takes a bit of flexibility to read English, a survivor's ability to roll with the punches. So: In HOW we began with the 85% of English which is reasonably spelled, we saved the irregularities till last, for good reason. None of them is 100% silly. And by the time you've come this far, you have all the advantages of reading them in a context in which these rascals occur. When you know how phonics works, they're not so bad.

Exceptions! Exceptions! Yes, there are Exceptions. English is worse than Italian, worse than Spanish, worse than Russian. But it's not all bad. About 85% of all English words can be read using what we have discussed. And for the last 15%? Well, they are not so bad either. There is no word that is all wrong. Every word has at least some phonic clues. Take the word "once",--one of the worst. It ought to be "wunce" or something like that. But even in its queeer spelling it is not without some hints to prevent us from reading "sometimes" or "perhaps". Real reading is not done with lists of words. Real reading has a context, a story, some ideas going on. If a story begins "once upon a time", it's easy enough to read "upon a time"; those words are in the 85%. So what might that first word be? The other words, plus the letteers o-n-c-e clue us in. What shall we do about Exceptions? Well, at first we'll just tell the beginner a word he can't sound out. At the same time we can show him the parts of the word he can sound out. Match the letters to the word to prove you're right: "pony" is not "horse", no! Words like "warm" and "worm" sound out close enough so that the reader can make the correction needed to make sense.

Next? Off to the library to borrow the best books we can find. Read them aloud to your children, sure. But also! let the children read them aloud to you! Short list to start on--

Peter Rabbit by Beatrice Potter
Story of Ferdinand by Munroe Leaf
Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling
Story about Ping by Marjorie Flack
Cinderella by Hilary Knight
Make Way for Ducklings by Robert McCloskey
Little Red Hen and other Little Golden Books
A Child's Garden of Verses by Robert Louis Stevenson
Mother Goose

Good Books for Good Readers

The child who can read well may find some of his "grade level" schoolbooks too easy. He needs a library card. Here are some children's classics and near-classics to broaden his experience. A good librarian can help you find more. All of these also lend themselves to reading aloud:

Kenneth Grahame: The Reluctant Dragon
Roger Lancelyn Green: Robin Hood
Robert O"Brien: Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
E.L.Konigsburg: Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth...and Me Elizabeth
Rumer Godden: The Kitchen Madonna; also Mouse House
Thornton Burgess: Mother West Wind Stories
Richard and Florence Atwater: Mr. Popper's Penguins
Rudyard Kipling: Just So Stories
Robert Lawson: Ben and Me
Dorothy Canfied: Understood Betsy
Wilfred Bronson: Wonderful World of Ants
Holling C. Holling: Paddle-to-the-Sea
Flanagan: Window into an Egg
Hugh Ruchlis: Orbit
Herbert Zim: What's Inside of Animals and other titles
Frances Hodgson Burnett: Secret Garden
Louisa Alcott: Little Men
T.H.White: The Sword in the Stone
Alice Geer Kelsey: Once the Hodja
Elizabeth Coatsworth: Jock's Island
P.L.Travers: Mary Poppins
Hendrick VanLoon: Story of Mankind
Additional lists can be found in an encyclopedia such as The World Book, Compton's, and others.

> *"It is our belief that education in a democracy gives everyone the equal right to become unequal as rapidly as his natural ability and determination will allow."* -John V. Bernard

"Easy reading" is a shabby way to get an education. The educated men and women of tomorrow are children reading great books-- today. Who will put these books into the child's hands?

Some Strategies for the Classroom Teacher

One-to-one has always been the best way to teach reading. How can the classroom teacher manage it?

~~~With the blackboard. Writing has always come before reading else there's nothing to read. On the very first day the teacher can step to the black board and write. (The McGuffey Primer starts with the word RAT). As she writes, the teacher sounds-out what she is doing: R-A-T. The very act of writing and sounding it out has demonstrated the letter-by-letter, left-to-write process in which reading follows writing. Hurrah! We have begun to learn to read on the very first day of school!

~~~With the big paper chart. What is written on this can be saved and re-read on another day. Nice for poetry. The class may well collect its own poetry anthology through the year.

~~~With paper and pencil. We all learn best by what each of us does by himself. Each child at his desk with paper and pencil can make his attempt to copy what the teacher has written. Or, each child can be provided with a set of small ABC cards. As the children make the words on their desks, the teacher can pass among them with assistance where needed. (No workbooks to grade.)

~~~With the Opaque Projector. For those children who have not been read to at home, this can be a first experience! Teacher spreads her copy of *Peter Rabbit* on the desk and the children watch her pointer on the screen matching her reading, page after page. In a day when upwards of 20% of the parents of our children are themselves illiterate, this may be an "equal opportunity" solution? Here again, re-reading can have great value, and we know how the children love to hear the same story over and over again!

~~~With Professional Approach. The teacher's job is to arrange for the learner's early success. This does not mean being sweet, full of praise and reassurance. The teacher is a Stranger to the children. She has no right to their respect until she earns it. (She would do better to treat them as if each were two years older than the office records say they are.) The learner learns by what the learner does, not by what the teacher says. The teacher who assures her beginners that "learning is easy" has insulted the children. There is no Success in doing something that is easy, easy, easy.
~~~

~~~With re-reading. Once a little boy balked when asked to re-read a paragaph, but he did, again, yet again. By the third time he was *reading the passage better,* and he knew it. "Let me do it Again!" he urged, and he did-- he read it six times before he sat back and gave a long sigh of happy satisfaction. He had discovered what it felt like to Read! Re-reading is one of our better tools.

> *"The very limited experimental evidence we have seems to indicate that a heavier code emphasis is more effective for children of lower socio-economic status, to give early independence in recognizing words to a child not surrounded by books and adults who help him." --Jeanne Chall*

~~~With poetry. The teacher can offer a short bit of poetry on the paper chart. Using her pointer she can read the poem out loud for the children, inviting them to join in as soon as they can. After several readings, as musical as possible,-- at the teacher's speed,-- they can pause to discuss words or ideas which need explanation (but no digressions into mere chatter). Then the teacher can ask the children to read the poem with her, as best they are able. As they do better on the next few readings, the teacher can drop out and let the children do it-- either because they can read it or because they have learned it by heart. This paper chart can be saved for another day, as blackboard work could not. Over the weeks, the class may find it has collected a nice little volume of poetry of its very own.

~~~With choral reading. When teacher and children memorize a poem, orally, together, no child is left out whether he can read or no. Once on a day in May, a mother took her almost-five son to visit a kindergarten, so that he might see for himself what going to school would be like. The teacher of that class assembled her thirty-odd youngsters, sitting on the floor before her, and they began to recite poetry to entertain their guests. Sometimes it was the teacher who announced the next poem, sometimes the children made suggestions. It was forty-five minutes later that the session came to an end,-- forty-five minutes of choral participation in hearing and saying favorite children's poetry. That was 30 years ago. I still savor the memory.
~~~

Sample First Lesson

An illiterate needs to become an "abecedarian". He can speak. He can understand. What he cannot yet do is convert printed language into familiar speech. The English language is written letter-by-letter, left-to-right. Learning to read it is done the same way-- letter-by-letter, left-to-right. When he is an abecedarian, he must start, just as writing started, with the alphabet letters which represent the sounds of speech. Will this slow phonic approach produce a "lip-reader"? Suppose it does. Would you rather have a lip reader or an illiterate? More likely: after a time of practising, the learner comes to decode the letters so fast that it will seem as if he reads whole words and phrases at a glance.

Step One: Sounding the letters

In any individual case, the instructor needs to know where to start. Testing, asking questions, is threatening, scary and offensive. We can put it this way to the learner: "I need to know where to start. Please help me out. Here are some letters. If you can, please make a sound for each letter."

The instructor will then lay before the learner, one by one, some alphabet cards, each with a single consonant printed on it, in lower case letters. Hold back the vowel cards, at first. As the learner responds, sort up the known consonants, quietly discarding the unknowns till later. Meanwhile, murmur "good, that's right" as often as possible. Just "murmur"; no exaggerated praise, just simple feedback.

Next the instructor will offer the vowel cards, one by one. If the learner can clearly sound out the five **short** vowels, he has a big headstart. Probably we'll get some vague blurrings on these short vowels, and then we know where to start. The instructor needs to say each short vowel sound, very clearly, coaxing the learner to sound it clearly. Praise success. Try again and again, clearly, gently, friendly.

It is time now to make a little chart which the learner can take home to tack up on the wall: the five short vowels, each with a little a sketch, to remind him of the key words: apple, elephant, igloo, ox, umbrella. This is to be practised between lessons until these sounds come easily.

Step Two: Syllables

The instructor will lay before the learner one consonant card followed by one vowel: /b/ plus /a/, and say the sound: /ba/. [It is important to really say it with the short /a/ as in "bat", and not "bah" !] Persuade the learner to repeat the /a/ sound.

Next, replace the /a/ with /e/ and say /be/ as in "bet",-- not the word "be". These are the **short** vowels first, remember.

Next say /bi/ as in "big". Then /bo/ as in "box' Then /bu/ as in "bug". Coax the learner to repeat these syllables: /ba/, /be/, /bi/, /bo/, /bu/; then using the cards mixed up, /bi/ba/bo/be/bu/ etc. Persuade the learner to hear and say the simple syllable, each time.

Then, change to a different consonant card, like this: /ma/ as in "map"; /me/ as in "met" [not "me"], /mi/ as in "mit"; /mo/ as in "mop"; /mu/ as in "mug". Switch to another consonant: /sa/ "sad"; /se/"sell"; /si/ "sip"/ /so/- "soggy"; /su/ "supper".

Keep going, changing consonants and vowels. And so on, the learner repeating each syllable. As soon as possible coax the learner into sounding the syllable on his own, with the instructor offering silence for thinking. Let this be done quite rapidly,, with the instructor murmuring, "yes! good! that's right!" as often as possible. For an error, the instructor may say "try again", or offer a correct model, but move on rapidly for new successes by the student.

Step Three: Sandwich Words

Using the letter-cards the instructor can make each syllable into a word by adding one consonant. Like this:

/ma/ into map, mad, man,
/be/ into bed, beg, bet,

mop..gum..jet..zip..tag..nod..dig..lug..top..pot

And so on. Suddenly the learner can read dozens and hundreds of these little sandwich words. If the learner calls out a word that isn't there, the instructor asks: "Where does it say that?" Do not tell the answers. The learner learns not by what the teacher says, but by what the learner does. Mistakes can be good learning tools.

[Caution: We teachers tend to talk too much! It is by what he does himself that the student learns. The instructor can set up the ABC cards, can point, and then offer Silence,-- a "count of ten", while the student thinks. "Sound it out, dear," said grandma, pointing with her needle, and then she went on knitting while the student struggled with his task.]

And all of the above can be done in less than half an hour! Keep it going fast. What the discouraged illiterate needs most of all is hope, belief, encouragement-- Success. The "I Can Do It Myself!"

Step Four: Why?

All this so far has been hard work. Both instructor and learner are likely to find themselves suddenly very tired. It may be a good time to lean back and talk. It may be a time to tell the learner what has been hidden from him: the problem was not in the learner. The problem was back in grade school in a system which did not show him what he has just been practising. Curiously, it has often been that individuals who did not learn to read by the methods commonly used in the schools have been people who were good in science and math. They wanted to know How things Work.

Phonics shows How print can be turned into the speech which we already use. Yes, there are rules, but most of them are spelling rules. For reading we need sounds, not rules. Yes, there are Exceptions which we'll come to later. It's only reasonable to learn what's regular before we get to exceptions. Two thirds of all English words use these five short vowels!

This might be a good time to draw a little graph to show the learner: 85% of all the words in the biggest dictionary can be read by straight-out phonics, if you know the phonics. And even the exceptions are at least partly phonic. What we aim to do here is to show the learner HOW to read ALL the words even in the biggest dictionary.

Step Five: Where Does It Say That?

A happy way to close this first session can be with a piece of real reading. Our ancestors, who used a hornbook, moved from practising the syllables to reading the Bible. It was often the only book they had.. The old hornbook ended with the Lord's Prayer, which the learner already knew by heart.

So, using a pointer, the learner and the instructor "read" aloud together the words of the Lord's Prayer. Slowly, clearly, lingering only on the sounds the learner already knows. Much of this prayer will not work easily for us because pronunciations have changed from long ago. But that need not matter because we already know what it says!

Alternately, try a short bit of poetry. Is there something the learner knows by heart? The words of a song? A Mother Goose rhyme? Learner and instructor can read it together, out loud, pointing as they go.

> Jack and Jill went up the hill
> To fetch a pail of water.
> Jack fell down and broke his crown
> And Jill came tumbling after.

Alas! Our reader said "bucket" instead of "pail"! The instructor will ask: "Where does it say that? Where does it say 'bucket'?" This is no time to explain the vowel, but the consonants will tell the story: /p/ and /l/ do not sound like "bucket". The student learns best by what the student himself figures out. And no, "bucket" is not good enough because it happens to mean the same thing: we are practising decoding print, not guessing.

In subsequent lessons, the instructor should not dawdle. Move ahead into the rest of phonics as rapidly as the learner can go. There is lots more practice on these short vowels as the learner moves on through Digraphs and Blends. Even in Parts 6, 7, and 8 of the HOW there are more opportunities to practice the short vowels when they are contrasted with long vowels. It is always possible to go back and review something, but the learner, particularly the adult learner, needs to feel that he is making progress.

And always: read Out Loud. Pointing as you go. What we are doing is the inside-out of writing. Somebody wrote it down, letter-by-letter, left-to-right. That's the way we have to read it. Turning the written text back into familiar speech.

Three Stages in Learning to Read

According to Charles Fries [Linguistics and Reading, 1963], there are three stages in learning to read. In the first stage the child learns to decode from the alphabet to words, sounding out the letters, from left-to-right. This is the inverse of writing: when we write we put down letters to represent sounds, letter-by-letter, left-to-right. There is no other way to write in English. This book is the HOW of that first stage.

In the second stage the child passes from conscious decoding to automatic decoding. That is, he becomes so familiar with the way the alphabet works that he can do it subconsciously. He catches on to whole words and phrases at a glance. As he reaches stage two he can add the "suprasegmental" elements, things not printed in the text, such as "tone of voice", expression, emphasis, appropriate pauses. As he reads orally he can hear himself, and then he may re-read a sentence with improved expression. The skilled adult reader does this too, sub-vocally, when he goes over a sentence he has misinterpreted.

In the third stage the child enters into imaginative realization of the story he is reading. At this point he is skilled at decoding and interpretation of sentence structures. Now, he pictures the scene in his mind, enjoys the adventure, gets to know the characters. This is genuine "reading for meaning". This is the goal of reading. But if we shortchange the child on steps one and two, he may never reach stage three.

"Children do not drop out in high school.
They drop out in second grade."
Hon. James Scheurer, NY.

It is hard work. Children expect to work at school. Some have come home crying because they did not begin to learn to read on the First Day of school. Learning can begin on Day One with Fries' Stage One, as above. Decoding need not be unpleasant: children who can read often invent secret alphabets for their friends to decode just for fun.

And isn't it really an insult to the child
if we insist that everything be easy, easy, easy?

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

AUTOMATICITY
Help for the "Word Caller".

The ANALPHABETIC
Sometimes called "Dyslexic" or "Learning Disabled" or "Remedial" case.

The CORPUS CALLOSUM
Fibers runs out.

Automaticity: A Special Time

"He knows phonics, but he doesn't comprehend what he reads."
"My child just reads on and on in a monotone, without even stopping for the periods. I can't stand it!"
"She wants to read the same book, over and over again!""

These are seven-year-olds. They are in what Montessori calls one of their "sensitive periods"-- meaning that they are at a stage of growth where certain activities just come naturally. Age Seven likes repetition. He likes to practice. He doesn't deal well with interruptions. So?

The mastery of phonics needs practice-- repetition to the point of mastery. When this is achieved, the child has attained "automaticity", meaning that he finally knows phonics so well that it has sunk below his conscious level, where he no longer needs to pay attention to the phonics; he is ready to enjoy the story.

Three rules:

1. Don't interrupt him during his practicing by asking questions about the meaning, trying to discover if he understands. He is not trying to understand. He is trying to master the decoding skill.

2. Make sure that the child has been taught all the elements of basic phonics decoding before he reaches this built-in time of willingness to practice. Sure, he will sound like a "word caller," for a while. Give him room to work his way through his needs.

3.Provide generous opportunities for him to read aloud to you- but also, do read aloud to him: he still needs this. You can take turns reading with him. Encourage him to read to his younger brother, to his grandmother, or even to his teddy bear.

There is a charming name for the child at this stage: he is an Abecedarian. He will outgrow it.

After he had been taught systematic phonics, one retrieved "dyslexic" said: "I knew there must be some trick to it."

The Analphabetic

Some special notes are in order for teaching a person to read who has already failed.

He is already embarrassed: do not test him. Teach him.
He is discouraged. Encourage him.
He is in a hurry. Slow him down.

He does not know why he has failed. Let us tell him. He may have accepted the pseudo-medical label "dyslexic." Let us give him his proper term: he is analphabetic. He has been put through a system which has failed, over and again for 50 years now and become a national scandal,-- not the fault of the children. Furthermore, often the ones who have failed to learn by look-say have had unusually logical minds (like Einstein and Edison). They want to know WHY. Phonics shows why. These students are often good at math and science.

He is scared, lonely, afraid. He has been hurt, shamed, ridiculed, put down as a dummy. Let us strike the word "no" out of our vocabulary. If he misses a word we will say nothing, just hold the fescue-pointer at the place and wait for him to figure it out. He will if we teach him faithfully. We will teach him the basic phonics, as outlined in HOW. But let there be no misunderstanding-- basic phonics for a beginner and for a remedial student have some wide differences in the problems and opportunities confronted.

1. Item. The remedial reader is not a beginner. His first problem is shame, embarrassment. For years he has accepted the label "dumbbell". He has learned all sorts of tricks for concealing his inability to read. On the other hand, his arrival at college can be testimony to his terrific ears: he has learned how to learn by listening to an extent that may well astound us. Yet the process of mastering the how-to of reading may well be a painful task for him and for his teacher, loaded with errors, discouragements, confusion, back-tracking,-- and slow. Whatever we can do to build self-confidence will help.

2. Item. For the beginner, if he is five or six years old, just starting school there is excitement and anticipation. For the remedial reader there is instead intense embarrassment. Fear. He has failed. Here is potential another failure.

3. Item. For the beginner there is the regular school day, tax-supported. For the remedial student there is loss of time from his regular classwork, or perhaps from his job, while he gets tutored, at no small costs.

4. Item. For the beginner there are no old habits to break. All the words are new words. For the remedial student there are old habits of guessing-from-context so that, in his haste to read, he reads what is not there. As he reads aloud to you, you will become aware that, although he has learned to read some big words, he is missing an appalling number of "little" words:

for..from was..saw they..then ever..very to..it on..no

There are old habits of pairs of words once learned together, now confused, so that he reads "up" for "down", "before" instead of "after,-- easy, everyday words, but this upsets the meaning of a passage scandalously! This is not evidence of medical dyslexia (a problem that exists in less that 1% of the population). It is a consequence of early effort to learn words as chunks instead of as letter-sequences. To help him takes patience. It is a bitter task for the remedial reader, to break old habits and try to learn new ones, particularly when the words he misses so often appear to be nothing but "little words". But somewhere in his brain, in the attempt to memorize words instead of sounding them out, he has stored a whole bunch of short-circuits, and he calls out the wrong one of a pair that he has stored together. To help him takes patience. It is very difficult to do. It can take weeks and weeks, even with a patient and loving mentor at hand.

5. Item. The beginner is happy to use a fescue-pointer to guide his eye, to feel out small differences, to notice each letter in its turn, from left-to=right. Unless someone makes fun of him or scolds him, the beginner will use a fescue-point until he reads so well that pointing only slows him down, at which time he will discard it without noticing that he has done so. The remedial reader is ashamed to use a pointer. He has been ridiculed for pointing. It is babyish to point. And so he bumbles on, mixing up "familiar" and "family", "indecent" and "incident", "conversation" and "conservation". What does he make of these curious errors? Does he scold himself once more for failing to understand? Does he suppose the writer to be weird? Is this one more way he proves to himself that he really is a dumbbell? Or does he conclude that reading is nonsense?

6. Item. The child is taught to read left-to-right. Words on the page. Letters in the word. Many and many a remedial reader has never been told that the letters in the word are sounded out from left-to-right. I have dealt with remedial readers -- in college!-- who looked up in surprise on hearing this information,-- and sometimes soon thereafter made surprising progress in reading!

7. Item. The beginner, learning phonics, is closer to what Montessori calls a "sensitive period" for language learning. The ear is sharp. The brain is ready. The eighteen-year-old needs our patience. But this is not to say that he can be less than accurate. Those five short vowels he must master!

8. Item. The beginner loves to read out loud. Since this is the way of learning phonics, he has a clear advantage. The remedial reader has been scorned when he tried to read aloud. Now he is embarrassed and ashamed to read aloud, though this would help him greatly in mastering phonics.

9. Item. And then, for the beginner, there is that wonderful Age Seven ahead, when a normal seven-year-old delights to read anything and everything, just for the fun of practising his new skill. By age eight this phase has passed. For the remedial reader by the time he is diagnosed, tested, assigned, and prescribed for, his age seven is past. He has to do the dull work of practising without the inborn urge for it. He may never become the reader he might have become if he had

a) learned phonics first
b) used a pointer, left-to-right
c) read aloud when still young
d) not suffered from early failure

Our remedial reader has experienced Reading-Post-Readiness. And it hurts.

What we can offer him is patience in a one-to-one situation,-- one teacher, one learner, only one book between them so that both can use the fescue on the letters as they go.

If we have a tape recorder, we can use it to record the learner as he reads aloud, then replay and let him see his own mistakes for himself. We can find professional recordings of good stories (Boris Karloff reading some of the Just So stories is grand!) and let the learner follow the text with fescue, then reread the story himself.

And there is one more thing we can offer-- praise. The remedial reader has had a bellyful of failure, no, no, no. Therefore, to the remedial reader we say Yes! yes! good! You got it! Right! Yes! yes! yes! And when he is wrong. Silence. Just hold the fescue and wait for the next chance to say Yes! Tell him when he is right by saying Yes! as often possible. If we scold him or say no, that doesn't tell the learner how to please us. We can hold the fescue and let him think. But we will have to pay close attention so that we can tell the learner when he is right. Murmur Yes, shout Yes, nod and smile Yes, reward and reinforce all the correct things the learner does.

Encourage. That means, put the heart into it.

Below are recorded samples of remedial students attempting to read a story. These illustrate how missing the "little words" destroys the meaning. As one observer put it: "The reader doesn't trust books to make sense."

Samples:

Recorded from the reading of a junior high school boy.
He was reading for his tutor from a version of Robinson Crusoe. He had successfully read big words such as "spyglass, merchant vessel, aroused, evidently, desperate". He is stumbling over "little words", but observe what happens to the meaning:

"For eight days Crusoe and Friday waited...His master went up and the hill, but what his saw was not a in...Crusoe felt as happy as thought he were a boy again...The bound men were dragged out of the boat as some as it landed...Perhaps he might yet do so that his man Friday's help...Crusoe said to the man who seemed to eldest, can we help? There had both them here to let them starve. Yes, is captain answered. A new were killed and the rest tried up in a cave. Here are two men warm are think you can count on. We seven show contentedly be enough for the ten of coming."

A man, age 22, a high school graduate,
Reading for his tutor from Jock's Island:

"Next morning Jock felt struggling than he had felt for some time. His first tell was to make sure that he ram was indeed...In the..of frog and wind and are one.., he met have been mistaken."

A boy, age 11, reading for his tutor from Mrs. Frisby:

"The sharp had cold began in December...She grew that both of these felt free to themselves...They were stored enough to carry ears of corn...Any kids of surprise was a race treat...I was captured with my ear companions...You can see what the floor was solid rock. Probably of certain before there was a farmhouse at the place...He read very book he took find."

Why would anyone even want to read if this is the kind of nonsense that comes out of books? The look-say, whole-word method which insisted on *beginning* with "reading for meaning" has ended in destroying meaning!

Time Runs Out: The Corpus Callosum

The left half of the brain is the language half. The right half is the picture half. The crossover connector between the halves is called the "corpus callosum". This corpus callosum develops gradually from before birth up to age 8 or 9. By age 9 it has developed some settled patterns for how to learn to read.

If a child is taught to read by phonics first, this work is done in the left brain to match spoken language. If a child is taught to read by a whole-word approach, this is done in the right brain, where each word is stored as if it were a picture. The unabridged dictionary contains nearly half a million words. Nobody uses that many. But the ordinary child easily uses 5,000 of them. Five thousand is a lot of pictures to hunt through to find the one you want, specially when the differences may be as small as, say, shirt/skirt. The child who has learned to read by basic phonics has had to deal with only 44 units, recombined endlessly to make up all the words there are.

Problem: At about age 9 that corpus callosum gets "set in its ways". It has learned, through practice, to handle print with either the right side of the brain or the left. Thereafter it becomes very,, very difficult to change what the corpus callosum will do. We can produce sociogenic dyslexia by teaching the beginner to read by the whole-word method, trying to use the right brain for a job that belongs to that language expert, the left brain. Can an adult learn to read? Maybe,-- if he has never tried to read with his right brain.

"Beginnings count double." --Romalda Bishop Spalding

Time Runs Out!

CHRONOLOGY

3.000 B.C. Cuneiform and hieroglyphics were ideographic writing, no alphabet.
5th century B.C. Greeks were using an alphabet, having added vowels to the Phoenician origin, and having by this time given up boustrophendon in favor of left-to-right writing.
First Century A.D. Quintilian described: giving ivory letters to children to play with; using letters grooved in a board for practising; and teaching the syllables, early and often, but slowly.
Fourth Century A.D. St. Jerome advocated carved ivory or wooden letters for child's play; also recommended teaching a child to write by holding his hand to guide it.
Fourth Century A.D. St. Ambrose of Milan astonished people by reading silently to himself without making any sounds. Before that, even when alone, a reader read aloud to himself.
Before c. AD 500 Anglo-Saxon was being written in the runic alphabet which included a symbol for "th", which Latin didn't need.
7th century A.D. Instead of running all the words together, texts began to leave spaces between words.
Middle Ages. Selected boys learned to read Latin in a monastery, with an occasional child taught to read by the mother, if she could read.
c.1100-1200 A.D. The Cistercians required their lay helpers to remain illiterate, as a way of maintaining workers to relieve the monks of menial chores.
c. 1450 Earliest record Andrew Tuer was able to find of a real hornbook.
1456 Gutenberg Bible was printed in Latin.
1477 William Caxton introduced printing into England, spelling the words as they sounded to him, and not always the same way!
17th Century John Locke described a dice game with ABC faces instead of numbers to teach children the letters of the alphabet.
1690 New England Primer offered sample words for teaching the letters of the alphabet.
1735 A cargo bound for establishing the Colony of Georgia listed 100 hornbooks.
1751 Benjamin Franklin wrote the proposal for the Philadelphia Academy, each child to be taught to read at home before school entry.
1755 Samuel Johnson published his Dictionary and froze English spelling into the patterns of his day,-- over 200 years ago.
1766 A story, "Little Goody Two Shoes", was published by John Newbery telling how a little orphan girl used carved wooden letters to teach other children how to read.
1770-1780 Records of Benjamin Collins, English inventor of the cardboard hornbook called a Battledore, show that he had sold more than 100,000 copes of it in these ten years.

1780 Robert Raikes opened his "Ragged School" to teach the children of the poor to read. This was the beginning of the Sunday School Movement.
1781 Pestalozzi described how in Gertrude's school the older children taught ABC's and syllables to the younger children.
1783 Noah Webster's Blue-Back Speller offered extended syllabaries, like the horn books of earlier centuries, with long lists of words. Noah Webster, by freezing spelling, contributed to problems with Exceptions. Our pronunciations have changed in 200 years.
1791 Friedrich Gedike published "Children's Book for First Practice in Reading without the ABC's and Spelling", the first look-say primer,-- and dropped it because it didn't work.
1817 First blackboard was in use.
1835 Thomas H. Gallaudet, teacher of the deaf, published "A Mother's Primer",-- whole word method. By 1844 Boston schoolmasters, who tried this method on normal children, abandoned it as a failure.
1836 First publication of McGuffey Readers, in use until 1920.
1846 John Russell Webb published "The New Word Method" teaching word lists before letters.
1904 John Dewey created his Laboratory School at U. of Chicago. Dewey *objected* to literacy because literacy favored individualism instead of socialism.
1908 Edmund Burke Huey published "Psychology and the Pedagogy of Reading" advocating that very little work in phonics be tolerated in early years.
1912 "Montessori Method" was published in English: phonics.
1913 Florence Akin's "Word Mastery" first published.
1914 William Kilpatrick published "The Montessori System Examined". He declared that Montessori was 50 years behind (!) in educational theory.
1925 Funk and Wagnalls dictionary had no entry for *dyslexia.*
1929 Arthur Gates at Teachers College, Columbia U. advocated greatly reducing phonetic instruction in first grade, or that it be eliminated entirely.
1929 Scott, Foresman invited Wm.S. Gray to revise the old Elson Readers, which thereafter became the look-say "Dick and Jane".
1930 Last revision the Beacon Readers, described at the time as "the chief program of systematic phonics leading quickly to reading folk tales, fairy tales, etc."
1930 Dr. Louelle Cole advocated having the child put two fingers in his mouth to prevent moving his tongue or jaws while reading.
1933 Ladies' Home Journal published Doman's "You Can Teach Your Baby to Read" advocating flash cards for infants.
1935 Thorndike published the "Teacher's Word Book", listing for early instruction a most-used word list, which includes a high proportion of Exception words for beginners, thus increasing learning-to-read difficulty.

1936 The writer of this HOW was trying to teach her first class of Remedial Reading-- and failed, for lack of the tools in this HOW book. Meanwhile, the older brothers of those kids were in the Civilian Conservation Corps, one of the make-work projects of the Depression, where the illiteracy rate in the C.C.C. was 1.9% who could not read a newspaper or write a letter. Those older brothers had been in first grade ***before look-say*** and were ***98% literate.***
1937 Samuel Orton published his observations: "The Sight (whole-word) Method of Teaching Reading as a Source of Reading Disability"
1941 Akin's "Word Mastery" (phonics) re-issued, still in print.
1944 Phonovisual Method first published, still in print.
1948 Hay-Wingo: "Reading with Phonics" first published.
1952 McEathron: "Your Child Can Learn to Read." (phonics)
1955 "Why Johnny Can't Read" by Rudolf Flesch,-- still in print.
1957 Spalding's "Writing Road to Reading" first published.
1958 Terman and Walcutt's "Reading: Chaos and Cure" published,-- listing 7 other phonic systems with high success records.
c. 1960 Roger Sperry's pioneering work on left-brain/right-brain functions, leading to corpus callosum studies.
1960 Daniels and Diack's "Royal Road Readers", London.
11961 Walcutt: "Tomorrow's Illiterates" published.
1961 Bloomfield and Barnhart's "Let's Read" published.
1962 McGuffey Readers newly offered, phonics.
1962 Noah Webster's Blue-Back Speller newly offered.
1963 Initial Teaching Alphabet (i/t/a) introduced.
1963 McCracken and Walcutt's Lippincott's Basic Reading series, phonics.
1965: Hunter Diack: "In Spite of the Alphabet" published: phonics.
1966 Raths et al: "Values and Teaching" ("values clarification" instructions for the classroom to teach that: Every opinion is just as good as every other opinion.
1967 Chall: "Learning to Read, the Great Debate": research concluding that phonics is the successful way to teach reading.
1973 Frank Smith published "Psycholinguistics and Reading", stating: "Skill in reading depends on using the eyes as little as possible." !
1976 First Kurzweil Reading Machine used a phonics-based program fed into a computer.
1978 Hay-Wingo "Reading with Phonics" re-issued.
1979 Open Court "Headway Program", systematic phonics
1982 Addison Wesley Reading Program, systematic phonics.
1984 Bauman and Johnson: "Reading Instruction and the Beginning Teacher", a current textbook for prospective teachers, discussed three methods for teaching reading-- "semantic, syntatic, and graphophonemic". Devoting less than three pages to "graphophonemics", the authors recommended two methods for teaching new words: (a) leave a blank space where the new word occurs and have the children guess what would fit; (b) encourage the children to say "Oh nuts!" and skip the word and read the rest of the sentence. This college text for teacher candidates, like many others, contained no description of systematic basic phonics.

1985 Blumenfeld's "Who Killed Excellence?": John Dewey's product.
1985 "Becoming a Nation of Readers" recommended phonics.
1986 Secretary Wm. Bennett: "What Works" recommended phonics.
1986 U.S. House Subcommittee report: Oversight on Illiteracy in the U.S., recommended phonics, explained *corpus callosum* as related to reading success, and discussed economics angles.
1987 Television news program predicted that 700,000 who are functionally illiterate will be graduating from high school this year,--with diplomas.
1987 Kalamazoo Gazette quoted local Christian schools: "We do not graduate illiterates." (They had kept phonics.)
1987 Another Congressional Subcommittee published "Competitiveness and the Quality of the American Work Force", reporting on the damaging effects of illiteracy on the national economy.
1988 Radio WBBM was regretting that "there is no book like the old McGuffey to teach children to read" ---? But the phonics instructions books are available, some listed above.
1989 The Reading Reform Foundation (Tacoma, Washington) offers a list of "90 publishers of intensive phonics reading materials". At the same time the House Subcommittee reports that "the majority of our schools are not using proven methods of teaching reading, as evidenced in "Becoming a Nation Readers".

1960 Anna retired. She had begun teaching first grade in 1915, using systemtic phonics. In 1930 older teachers like Anna were still slipping phonics into their new look-say classrooms. By 1960 these teachers were gone. Children who were in the first grade after 1960 are now approaching age 30; all too many of them cannot read well enough to read aloud to their children. Look-say has been in use for 50 years.

March 31, 1989 National literacy hotline reported 7,477 volunteeers offering to tutor, but only 2,356 illiterate adults coming for instruction. It is very difficult for an adult to admit to being illiterate and seek help.
March 20, 1986-- In that Congressional Report Charles M. Richardson said: ***"Let's engineer the system, train the regular first and second grade teachers to do it right the first time.*** The track record of remedial teaching is its own condemnation."

HOW: a bibliography

Hunter Diack: In Spite of the Alphabet (Chatto & Windus, London, 1965) History and comparisons of methods of teaching reading.

Robert K,Logan: The Alphabet Effect: The Impact of the Phonetic Alphabet on the Development of Western Civilization. (St.Martin's Press,1986)

George Bernard Shaw: On Language (Philosophical Library,1963) Includes Sir James Pitman on Augmented Roman.

Charles C. Walcutt,editor: Tomorrow's Illiterates (Little Brown 1961) Experiences of tutors with remedial cases.

E.M.Standing: Maria Montessori, her Life and Work (Mentor-Omego, 1962, pages 47-50) How four-and five-year-olds "exploded into reading".

Charles C. Fries: Linguistics and Reading (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962) The three stages in learning how to read.

Samuel L. Blumenfeld: "Who Killed Excellence?" in Imprimis, September,1985 (Hillsdale College, Hillsdale,Mich.) History of how the trouble in teaching reading began.

Jeanne Chall: Learning to Read, the Great Debate (McGraw-Hill, 1967) Harvard professor reviews the research and states: *"I usually found that the change had resulted mainly from the dissatisfaction of one person in the school who insisted that teaching could be improved."*

Rudolf Flesch: Why Johnny Can't Read,1955,--still in print and also Why Johnny Still Can't Read,1981, (Harper & Row)

Alfred C. Moorehouse: Triumph of the Alphabet (Schuman, 1953) History of alphabetic writing.

Andrew Tuer: History of the Horn-Book (Benjamin Bloom, 1897, 1968) Hornbook and fescue as museum interests.

William L. Armstrong, Chairman: Illiteracy: An Incurable Disease or Education Malpractice? (U.S.Senate Republican Committee, September 13, 1989)

Hearing of the U. S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Literacy (March 20, 1986, Serial #99-91 (U.S. Government Printing Office) Technical information about the corpus callosoum, together with research experience on the efficiency of methods of teaching reading.

William Bennett: What Works and First Lessons, (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1986) Advice for parents and schools for improvement.

Richard L. Gregory: The Oxford Companion to the Mind (Oxford University Press, 1987) Information about corpus callosum.

Kathryn Diehl: Johnny Still Can't Read-- But You Can Teach Him at Home (Reading Reform Foundation, 949 Market St. Tacoma WA 98402) Phonics plus history of the problem.

BASIC PHONICS

J.C. Daniels and Hunter Diack: The Royal Road Readers,
Teachers' Book plus children's readers (Chatto & Windus. London)
Basic Phonics readers with stories. Best example.

Mary C. Hletko & Charles E. Wingo: The New Reading with Phonics, Teacher's Edition (J.B. Lippincott Co., 1978)
Phonics exercises in workbooks.

Charles C. Walcutt & Glen McCracken: Lippincott Basic Reading Teacher's Edition Books A & B (Harper & Row, 1981)
Basic reading series phonically organized, illustrated for children.

William McGuffey: McGuffey's Eclectic Primer, and also First Reader (American Book Co., 1837, 1920)
Primer that moves through phonics fast, with stories.

Florence Akin: Word Mastery including "Suggestions to Teachers" page 110 (Houghton Mifflin Co. 1913, 1941)
Lists of words phonically classified and indexed as a handbook.

Lucille D. Schoolfield and Josephine B.Timberlake: The Phonovisual Method (Phonovisual Products, Rockville,Md.)
Instructions with desk/wallcharts of consonants and vowels arranged for a child's use.

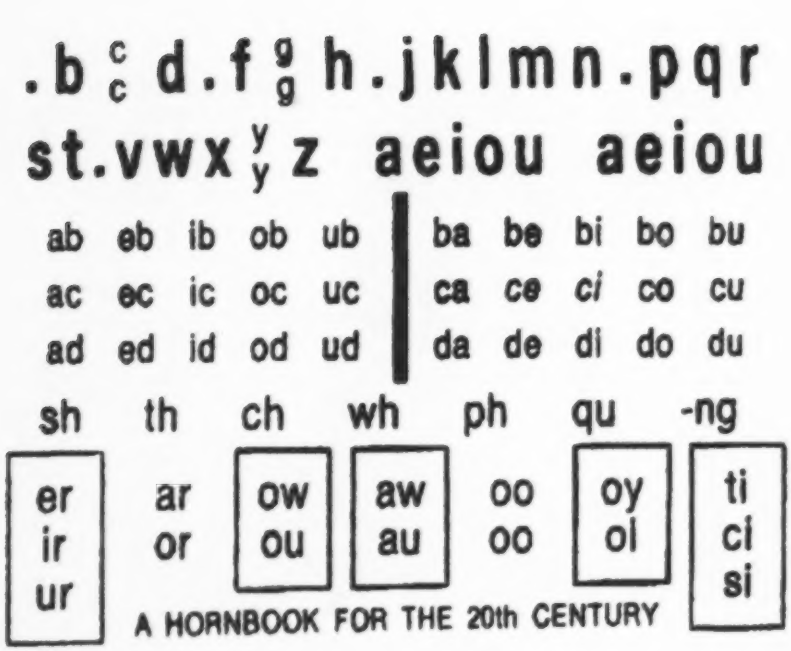
Romalda Bishop Spalding: The Writing Road to Reading (Whiteside and Wm. Morrow Co., 1962) Phonics and spelling combined.

Leonard Bloomfield and Clarence Barnhart: Let's Read (Wayne State University Press, 1961)
Many pages of words and sentences phonically graded, with index.

Let not the reader be put off by any lack of recency in the above list. Those who say "we do teach phonics" and those who say "no one method is best" have been overloooking something. How to teach reading as described in the above books is very old. The Phoenicians did it first.

The Opposition: William S. Gray; Arthur Gates; E.A. Betts; E.W.Dolch; Glenn J. Doman; Paul Witty; Paul McKee; Nila B.Smith; Kenneth Goodman; National Education Association; International Reading Association; many teacher-training programs.

This HOW instruction book will work. But it is Work. Nothing happens from merely owning the book. Lessons that are short and come often work best. It is reasonable to plan for at least ten weeks for a beginner; up to two years for a remedial case after age 9.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A HORNBOOK FOR THE 20th CENTURY

1. Sound out the letters in the word from left-to-right.
   Use a fescue-pointer for this.

2 The vowel is short unless something makes it long.
   When two vowels go walking together,
   the second vowel serves as a pusher to make the first vowel say
   its alphabetic name.
This effect will go through one intervening consonant,
but not through two: the second consonant works like a screen door to
block the pusher effect. (There are exceptions, of course.)

paid toad hoped hopped

3. The letter C sounds like K most of the time, but if the next letter
after the C is an E, an I, or a Y, the C switches to an S sound.

cat cent city cot cup cycle

The letter G can behave in similar fashion, but the rule doesn't always
hold for G. Try out both to see which makes sense.

4. Many other rules are spelling rules. Phonics for reading uses but
few rules. Phonics uses sounds.
..

COUPON for a complimentary copy

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"I just wish I had discovered earlier that reading aloud to yourself is not 'illegal' for students. When I was young it was considered terrible to read out loud to yourself. I have discovered that this reading aloud greatly contributes to my understanding and enjoyment of my studies."---from a college upperclassman's paper.